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Problems of Modern Democracy: Political and Economic Essays.

By EDWIN LAWRENCE GODKIN. Pp. 332. Price, \$2.00. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896.

It is matter for congratulation that these essays, with their wealth of trenchant criticism and strenuous thinking upon political and economic questions, have been gathered from the half dozen periodicals, in which they were originally published into a single neat volume. Three of the essays bear date of 1896, and seven more belong to the last ten years. The remaining essay, the first and by far the longest, dates from the closing year of the Civil War.

Yet this analysis of "Aristocratic Opinions of Democracy," made thirty years ago, is not only the strongest piece of writing in the volume, but it also pursues a line of inquiry which recent happenings have made strangely *à propos*. Not a few critics of American political and social institutions have fallen into the error, prominent in the writings of even so great a publicist as M. de Tocqueville, of concluding that the characteristic features of our civilization result from but a single cause, that they are the normal and permanent effects produced by "democracy, the operation of the principle of equality."

Mr. Godkin, on the other hand, insists that "the agency which gave democracy its first great impulse in the United States, which has promoted its spread ever since and has contributed most powerfully to the production of those phenomena in American society which hostile critics set down as peculiarly democratic, was neither the origin of the colonists, nor the circumstances under which they came to the country, nor their religious belief; but the great change in the distribution of the population, which began soon after the Revolution, and which continues its operation up to the present time." During the colonial period the dependence upon England for many of the necessities and conveniences of life, and the difficulties of travel constituted strong obstacles to expansion, and the people of the fringe of colonies tended to become more homogeneous and to reflect the life and manners of the mother country. But following the Revolution came the rapid migration westward in successive waves, immensely stimulated by the spread of steam navigation on the great rivers, then by the influence of railroads, and swelled by the floods of immigrants from abroad. It presently resulted that "the pioneering element in the population, the class devoted to the task of creating new political and social organizations as distinguished from that engaged in perfecting old ones, assumed a great preponderance." It is this frontier element that has fixed upon American life the traits of a *new* country,—traits not to be found in a country democratic and not at the same time

new,—such as eagerness in pursuit of individual gain, want of respect for training and profound faith in natural qualities, the absence of a strong sense of social and national continuity and of taste in art and literature and oratory, and a prodigious contempt for experience and for theory. But “the greatest fault of new countries is their newness, and for this time is the great remedy.” It may, therefore, be anticipated that, prominent as some of these unfortunate traits have been in the past few months, every day that passes will weaken the force and hasten the disappearance of the frontier element.

The appearance of Sir Henry Maine’s “Popular Government” and of Mr. Lecky’s “Democracy and Liberty” served to call from Mr. Godkin enlightening comment and criticism. He insists that it is not enough for the critics to point out defects in democracy. They must compare general happiness with general happiness, and show us where and when was the Golden Age from which we who live under democracy have fallen away. The utter insecurity of the basis upon which Sir Henry Maine grounds his doubts as to the stability of democracy is clearly shown. “Democracy,” as Mr. Godkin defines it, “is simply an experiment in the application of the principle of equality to the management of the common affairs of the community.” Its advance he deems irresistible. The successful carrying out of the experiment is complicated by the failure of our nominating system, the growth of corporations, the decline of legislatures, and the transfer of government in a rich community from the rich to the poor. In short, “Democracy in America, like democracy and monarchy elsewhere, is following the course of other political societies. It is suffering from unforeseen evils, as well as enjoying unforeseen blessings. It will probably be worse before it is better. It is trying a great many experiments in laws and manners, of which some, doubtless, will be hideous failures. The régime of ‘crazes’ through which it is now passing is very discouraging, but it is engaged, like most other civilized societies, in a search after remedies.” In illustration, the history of the movement for civil service reform is instanced, proving that when a democracy is once convinced that a wrong must be righted, the work can be done with phenomenal rapidity and thoroughness even in the face of apparently insurmountable obstacles.

In “The Economic Man,” and “Who Will Pay the Bills of Socialism?” Mr. Godkin has held in reserve his choicest sneers for the “romances of the ethical economists.” He insists that these men are less scientists than politicians, would-be lawmakers, “mainly occupied in the attempt by legislation to take away money from capitalists and distribute it among laborers.” “A very large part of their

work," he continues, "is to be wrought through 'ethics,' or 'the science of ethics,' which, I believe, is the name given by the various schools to the opinions of some of their members about the injustices of the competitive or present system." There is not a little of bias and unfairness in these essays, but they insist with refreshing vigor upon some often neglected truths, that individual liberty is a priceless good; that the present wealth total is so small that no readjustment of distribution could give to each family more than a very slender sum, and hence that any millennial scheme of distribution must be put aside as Utopian, unless it gives assurance of a greatly increased wealth dividend while population makes little or no gain. "The Political Situation in 1896," "Political and Social Aspects of the Tariff," and "Criminal Politics," deal most pungently with topics of to-day.

The remaining essays, "Idleness and Immorality," "The Expenditure of the Rich," and "The Duty of Educated Men in a Democracy," sound a note hardly to be expected from one who has just spoken so contemptuously of "ethics." Mr. Godkin asserts that "the taxes paid by the annuitant or *rentier* class are but a trifling return, in reality, for the security they possess for person and property." Into the mouth of the "reasonably or unreasonably" resentful masses he puts the prediction that "we shall never have social peace till every man has a fair share of social burdens." But, since "the best thing in the world is individual freedom," Mr. Godkin opposes any attempt by legislation to adjust these burdens more equally, and contents himself with urging upon the rich the unprecedented "opportunities for men of fortune to find enjoyment in contributions to the public welfare." He summons them to leave their childish round of sports, their aimless wanderings, their vulgar display of wealth in huge houses, and to devote themselves to the "work of persuasion through voice and pen" and to the ministering to the public in the gift of noble buildings and works of art. It remains to be seen whether this appeal to the rich to recognize their most refined enjoyment, their most enlightened self-interest, will prove more effective than the preaching of "the law of social service" and "the responsibilities of wealth" by the despised "ethical economists."

There is no flavor of cant or of sentiment about these essays. Their atmosphere is decidedly cool. Mr. Godkin frankly avows: "Now I am not an enthusiast for Popular Government, or for any other form of government. I believe politics to be an extremely practical kind of business, and that the communities which succeed best in it are those which bring the least enthusiasm to the conduct of their affairs." But in lieu of fervor and enthusiasm the candid reader will

gratefully accept that which is far more needed,—an honest purpose, straightforward, vigorous thought, and fearless criticism.

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Economics: An Account of the Relations Between Private Property and Public Welfare. By ARTHUR TWINING HADLEY, Pp. xi, 496. Price, \$2.25. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896.

Nothing perhaps in Mr. Herbert Spencer's writings has given such healing balm and comfort to professional economists as the well-known first chapter of the "Study of Sociology," with its forcible sketch of the readiness of the popular mind to pass absolute judgment upon complex questions of economic policy. The common absence of what Professor Giddings has phrased "popular respect for economic knowledge" is in considerable part the penalty paid by an unfinished science, the subject-matter of which consists largely in facts of familiar experience. In some degree, however, it seems a result of the splendid aloofness of the economist. His unending theme has been the complexity of modern industrial life and the easy descent to economic dicta; but his effort to provide a clue to the tangled skein has been rare and inadequate. The periodic preparation of economic guides to the perplexed is surely not the prime mission of the economist. Yet to the hard-headed, well-balanced man of affairs the need of an intelligible interpretation of industrial life, is pronounced, and the worth of the professional economist is estimated by this larger student body by a relentless law of subjective utility.

The careful reader will put aside Professor Hadley's "Economics" with a keen sense that here more successfully than in any treatise since written has the method of Adam Smith been reproduced. The conscious purpose of the book is "to apply the methods of modern science to the problems of modern business." The busy economic world that hums and throbs about us, the ceaseless activities of men engaged in complex processes of "getting a living" constitute the essential data; scientific method, forcible exposition and large acquaintance with practical details afford the requisite apparatus, and the result is an interpretation as remarkable in grasp as it is vigorous in statement.

But Professor Hadley's book will not be read merely as a semi-popular exposition of economic phenomena; it will be studied as a contribution to economic science. The student reader has throughout the satisfying sense of close touch with the body of economic thought and with the current of economic discussion. Appealing as it does both to the specialist and the general reader, fault will doubtless be found with the author for omitting some things and over elaborating